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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by Human Rights Advocates, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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1. This statement addresses one of the greatest gender crimes that continues into the 21st century: the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children in the context of armed conflict. This statement focuses on: the need for peace agreements to include provisions for the ongoing protection of women's physical security; accountability for violations of their human rights; and commitment to the development of laws and policies aimed at eradicating trafficking while focusing on the impact of trafficking during and in post-conflict reconstruction. This statement also addresses the unique role men and boys play in the perpetuation of trafficking as well as to the negative impact trafficking has on men and boys, especially on their health, including the proliferation of HIV/AIDS. It is only by addressing the role that men and boys play in the trafficking industry that this crime can be eradicated.

2. The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995 addressed the issue of including gender perspectives in resolutions that pertain to conflicts and foreign occupations. Gender perspectives were also emphasized in Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted on October 31, 2000. The Resolution was established in order to address the unequal and detrimental effects armed conflict has on women and children. The Resolution urged the Secretary General to include female participation into all level of decision-making personnel as well as to incorporate a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements as well as into all post conflict peacekeeping operations.[1]

3. Pursuant to a request in Resolution 1325, the Secretary General submitted a report on October 6, 2002. The report outlined the different experiences women and children face during armed conflicts, in particular, sexual violence and exploitation. With regards to peacekeeping operations, the report emphasized that "few mandates of peacekeeping missions make explicit reference to women and girls.... None have included a commitment to gender equality."[2] In addition, peace agreements following conflict often contain impunity or amnesty arrangements that relieve accountability for abuse or trafficking of women during conflict. Thus, although gender mainstreaming has been deemed an important component in ending gender inequality and human rights abuses in general, concrete measures have yet to implemented.

4. Trafficking is a direct manifestation of deeply ingrained gender inequalities that transcend national borders. Women and children that are trafficked are often regarded as commodities that are bought and sold in order to satisfy male patrons' desires as well as the profit motive of the traffickers. Because of the ever increasing demand for women and children, the human trafficking trade has become the second largest form of profit for organized crime after the drug trade.

5. Some of the major perpetuators of the trafficking industry are individual member countries' own armed forces and U.N. peacekeeping personnel. Within the military structure, it is often deemed not only acceptable, but also appropriate to use women in order to sexually satisfy the almost exclusively male troops. Generally, commanders do nothing to change their troop's practices, often shrugging them off with a "boys will be boys" attitude. That nonchalant attitude makes it especially difficult to address the problems associated with trafficking.

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[1] Security Council Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (2000).

[2] Report of the Secretary General on women, peace and security, S/2002/1154.

6. The Secretary General's report of 2002 addressed the correlation between international interventions and prostitution and trafficking. In his report, the Secretary General stressed the need to train and discipline sexual offenders. Most importantly, the report called on each individual troop-contributing State to enhance its own efforts to prevent the sexual exploitation of women.

7. Men in the military must understand the implications of their actions. They are not only buying women and children for sex, but are also helping to perpetuate the trafficking industry and the exploitation of women and children in general. Furthermore, men are themselves damaged by the trafficking industry on various levels. Policies that hold men accountable for their actions as well as educational programs aimed at educating men as to all facets of this industry need to be implemented in order to force men to accept responsibility for their actions.

Military Bases and Soldiers

8. There is a high correlation between war and the trafficking of women and children. Often, military presence in certain countries or regions actually creates or at least, helps to expand, commercial sex industries.

9. The Vietnam War of the late 1960's and early 1970's illustrates a situation where the establishment of military bases catalyzed the development of commercial sex industries. The United States (U.S) military personnel's demand for sex spurned the creation of sex industries outside military bases not only in Vietnam, but also in other counties where U.S. troops were stationed such as Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Okinawa. The military's burgeoning demand for sex became so potentially lucrative to countries hosting U.S troops that Thailand actually formally passed the Entertainment Places Act in 1966 in order to increase revenue from U.S. forces and "support the boys."[3] By the mid 70's there were 800,000 prostituted Thai women.

10. In 1985, reporters in Honduras discovered prostitution rings located near U.S. military bases. At these bases, U.S army doctors conducted medical examinations in the brothels in order to ensure that American soldiers would have access to sex without jeopardizing their health.[4]

11. Today, almost every U.S. military base in the United States, Germany, and Okinawa has a thriving red light district near it.[5]

12. In Myanmar, military soldiers are known to rape and traffic Burmese women into prostitution in neighboring Thailand. Rape along Myanmar's militarized borders has been reported, where military personnel pursued a relentless campaign against minority ethnic

[3] Talleyrand, Isabelle, Military Prostitution: How the Authorities Worldwide Aid and Abet International Trafficking in Women, 27 Syracuse J Int'l L. & Com. 151 (2000).

[4] Id.

[5] Mirkinson, Judith. Red Light, Green Light: The Global Trafficking of Women (1994).

groups. For example, in January 2003, eight government soldiers reportedly raped an ethnic minority woman during a visit by the International Red Cross officials to the region.[6]

13. Army officers guarding forced labor projects are also alleged to be guilty of sexual misconduct by demanding sexual favors in return for lighter duties or release from conscription.[7]

U.N. Peacekeeping Troops

14. There is also abundant documentation on the use of women and children in prostitution by United Nations personnel in various parts of the world. This evidences a lack of respect for women and children by the very institution meant to protect them.

15. During the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) mission between 1993 and 1993, 22,000 UNTAC troops were reported to have created a prostitution industry by trafficking Vietnamese women into Cambodia.[8] During this UNTAC mission it is estimated that prostitution rose from 6,000 to 25,000 and there was an overall increase in child prostitution, sex houses, and Thai style massage parlors. Furthermore, by the end of their two year term in Cambodia, four times as many U.N. soldiers had contracted HIV as were killed by hostilities or accidents.[9]

16. In Mozambique, reports revealed that U.N. peacekeeping soldiers encouraged prostitution by buying sex from underage girls as young as 12 and 14 years old.[10] Furthermore, in the streets of Zagreb, U.N. troops were known to stop local women on the street and ask how much they cost.[11]

17. In Bosnia and Kosovo NATO and U.N. peacekeeping personnel have been reported to be important clients for traffickers.[12]

Recommendations:

18. Governments must not overlook the fact that military presence continues to perpetuate the demand for the sex trade which helps to propel the trafficking trade. Thus, we ask the Commission on the Status of Women to urge ECOSOC to:

a. Ask that the Secretary General follow up on his 2002 report and pay special consideration to the trafficking issue, including:

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[6] VOA News, Burmese Soldiers Accused of Raping Ethnic Minority Woman (2003).
[7] Burma Project: Human Rights Abuses Overview (2003).
[8] Talleyrand, Isabelle, Military Prostitution: How the Authorities Worldwide Aid and Abet International Trafficking in Women, 27 Syracuse J Int'l L. & Com. 151 (2000).
[9] Mackay, Angela, Peace News. Sex and the peacekeeping soldier: the new U.N. resolution. (2003).
[10] Talleyrand, Isabelle, Military Prostitution: How the Authorities Worldwide Aid and Abet International Trafficking in Women, 27 Syracuse J Int'l L. & Com. 151 (2000).
[11] Id.
[12] Mackay, Angela, Peace News. Sex and the peacekeeping soldier: the new U.N. resolution (2003).

i. The recommendations for effective gender training programs;

ii. Redefinition of attitudes regarding gender within the military;

b. Implement a monitoring and compliance task force in which governments report to a special rapporteur or similar mechanism appointed to specifically deal with trafficking;

c. Recommend to individual member states and U.N commanders that they hold soldiers accountable for their actions. In order to facilitate this, all military forces must be held to strictly abide by established clear codes of conduct that protect the physical security and ensure freedom of movement specifically of women and children that is crucial to ending trafficking. In addition, leaders must receive training in the appropriate forms of discipline and must be held accountable themselves for failing to discipline their troops. Member states and U.N commanders should be asked to report to the Special Rapporteur on trafficking regarding their progress in this area;

d. Recommend to member states and the Security Council that:

i. Parties to peace accords provide effective mechanisms to ensure the prosecution of violators of the codes of conduct and to refrain from incorporating amnesty or impunity arrangements for perpetrators of trafficking into peace agreements;

ii. Include a commitment to adopt and implement standards to eliminate the trafficking of women and children.